

## Phenomenon of “Disputable States” in Multi-Religious Regions: Subject of Influence of Instrument of a Global Game

Silayeva Zoya Vladimirovna  
Kazan Federal University, 18 Kremlevskaya, 420008 Kazan, Russia

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**Abstract:** Dismantling of colonial system, break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, a series of protracted unresolved political ethno-confessional conflicts in multi-religious regions brought another topicality to the questions of essence and functions of the state with undetermined political status. The absence of criteria of national identity, recognition and solvency brought to widening of variety of problematic political and territorial entities. Regardless of differences in internal structure and position in world political system, I suppose, they may be considered as a whole entity called “disputable states”. In this study I have tried to analyze available concepts for defining of various forms of problematic quasi-public entities and rectification of “disputable states” concept. The main methodological approach of the research is new institutional economics.

**Key words:** Disputable states, unrecognized states, multi-religious region, national insolvency, entity

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### INTRODUCTION

In spite of the fact that domestic and foreign scientists have been actively analyzing mechanisms of functioning and internal development of states that have problematic national identity, there are only a few sources that touch upon problems of unrecognized, partially recognized and failed states. The majority of them are generally devoted to study of separate cases of post-Soviet, post-Yugoslavia spaces and African countries (Beissinger and Young, 2002; Yu, 2009; Matsuzaty, 2006). Major faults of these works lie in the fact that their researchers do not either seek to develop unified methodological approaches to study of “disputable states” phenomenon or define criteria of insolvency and absence of recognition.

Theoretical and methodological conceptualization of these state entities is only being established at the moment. Currently scientists who work in the sphere of political science and international relations face the task of finding optimal methodological and theoretical approaches to study of “disputable states” phenomenon. Complex approach to its study will allow to define peculiarities of their internal development and to discover connection between key tendencies of their formation and international status. Obtained results will allow outlining perspectives of recognition of territories with special national status and evolution of their solvency.

The most appropriate approach to theoretical and methodological approach to investigation of “disputable states” is “New institutional approach”. It allows considering “disputable states” as political institution in

terms of interrelation between formal norms and informal rules of game which form continuum of complex organizational relations, forms of interrelations and uniting activity of international institutes that maintain world order.

Modern political map is a fragmentary space, full of various political and territorial entities that wish to occupy their place in the system of international relations. The results of studies, held by domestic scientists (Ilyin *et al.*, 2010; Troitskiy, 2009), showed that today there are several dozens of political entities whose status is being disputable.

Principally, it is referred to unrecognized and partially recognized states, political territories that are controlled by secessionist, liberation or insurrectionary movements and those that claim to their legitimation inside and outside corresponding countries. These states also include insolvent territorial entities that have some attributes of national identity and that are associated with other states such a non-obvious way that their status may be called problematic in terms of science.

Both foreign and Russian political science is characterized by absence of integral categorical and conceptual construct that is necessary for investigation of actual fragmentation of political space in question under the action of internal and external factors. Polysemanticity of the notion “disputable state”, popularity and complexity of its usage in everyday life as well as in science sphere created additional difficulties for revision of accumulated experience and definition of its key meanings from a perspective of this study.

The term “disputable state” was officially introduced into scientific use by Geldenhuys (2009) who suggested using it for definition of all quasi-national subjects that seek for formal recognition of their independence but which do not receive it due to various reasons.

Accuracy of the term in question may be disputed basing upon the rules of international law, however in terms of politology this category is correct; it includes all territorial formations, deprived of international legal standing but having other basic characteristics of national identity and various degrees of solvency.

The most part of “disputable states” deserve to be called “states”, since they correspond to official requirements of national identity in international law. In some of them institutes of public power have been formed and functioned as well as the mechanisms of their formation, as well as some political and legal institutions. They also have their own economic complexes, their own financial and tax systems. Many of them are even more developed than some countries that are considered to be recognized.

Unrecognized state Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) in terms of economic is more developed than Moldavia and Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army is being the complex of battle-worthy military formations that are highly competitive with all regular armies of Southern Caucasus in terms of organization.

Introduction of the term “disputable state” into scientific use has a positive value for science. It has broader meaning which is actually less contradictory than the term “unrecognized state”. It is explained by the fact that currently there are almost no “fully recognized states”, since they have a range of political, economical and cultural relations with regional and leading subjects of world politics, they cooperate with international organizations and associations. For example, Taiwan is partially recognized state that actually controls its territory implements diplomatic relations through its economical and cultural branches, being the subject of international politics and economics.

Moreover, each unrecognized state has its own “patron” (it is the USA for the Republic of Kosovo, Russia for Abkhazia and South Osetia, Turkey for Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, etc.) which are recognized and fully established states, being members of United Nations Organization. As a rule, such “patrons” are the first ones to provide international legal recognition to quasi-state, “coordinated” by it. Although, it does not always mean that in future such quasi-state will be recognized by the majority of other countries that are members of UNO. As Troitskiy notes, nowadays in all the cases the right for recognition is disputed by some

other full-fledged members of international community. In this regard, the author emphasizes that “disputable state” is not “completely unrecognized subject but a kind of quasi-national entity which is impeded by some other subjects on its way of obtaining full-fledged status” (Troitskiy, 2009).

This is also proved by changes in global politics in regards to the problem of recognition of such states which is topical these days. Scientists and politics express increased attention to the necessity of codification of recognition institute, the absence of which led to the gap in fundamental question of international law and filling it with normative acts, generally recognized principles and indefinite statements which worsened the problem and in future this may lead to its fragmentation.

#### **INTERRELATION BETWEEN NON-RECOGNITION AND INSOLVENCY IN THE CONCEPT OF “DISPUTABLE STATES”**

An important part in the process of recognition is played by consolidation level of state solvency of new formation, support of its activity by its own people and community of other countries as well as consolidation stage of international system itself which touches upon the question of accepting it as a full-fledged established countries in the period of crisis on maximum or minimum level of phase trend of international dynamics (Ilyin *et al.*, 2010). However, it should be realized that all these circumstances predetermine recognition conditions only in some way. The recognition itself in many ways depend on determination, coherence and persistence of political elite and citizens of self-styled state to occupy its place in international system as well as to become its efficient and well-established member which in many aspects depend on abilities of self-appointed state (which would become de-facto established state later) to develop its solvency.

Meanwhile as Kudryashova (2011) notes, “self-appointed” political formations usually struggle for a long period of time to be recognized. Such formations are characterized by destruction of economics and infrastructure, low level of human potential’s development and high level of government’s criminalization and a range of other problems that interfere with the formation of national solvency. This statement may be agreed with to some extent only. Some unrecognized or partially recognized states are currently demonstrating their solvency in terms of constituent characteristics and sometimes even override states recognized by international community per corresponding indicators. For instance, Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic,

Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Taiwan, etc. In this regard, it would be more reasonable to speak about various levels of inconsistency of territorial formations.

However, actualization of problem of failed states led to the situation when trying to assess condition of currently existing territorial polities, the majority of researchers used essentially disputable notions, metaphors, used non-strict instruments for scientific investigation and avoided defining common criteria of their assessment. As a result, scientific use was introduced with terms, adopted from American political sciences, like: “weak”, “failed”, “dying”, “crashed”, “fragile”, “damaged”, “reduced” states.

Dunaeva associates their occurrence in the West with heritage of “Cold War”, since the study is based only on usage of concepts of weakness, insolvency, dependency and failure of states. In her study, she emphasizes that in the period of “Cold war” examination of peripheral countries was often initiated by American security agencies which were building relations between politicians and scientists (Dunayeva, 2007). One of the first examples is represented by the working party, set up at the initiative of Vice-president of the USA. Gore and at the support of CIA working group dedicated to state’s insolvency. Another well-known group was represented by researchers of failed states, united for implementation of program, created by American Peace Fund together with “Foreign Policy” magazine. Science had to serve politics, justifying resolutions, taken by political elite.

American researchers claimed that failed weak states threaten international security (Minayev, 2007), “exporting political instability” to adjacent areas. In order to “liquidate” those, scientists were developing theories of evolution and modernization which were further causing a certain influence on political processes in these countries for a long period of time.

However, one should admit the fact that modern Western scientists made a great contribution into study of failed states. Thus, Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic (2009) write in their book “Stable factors of state’s weakness in globalization era” that there is a necessity of changing the concept of weak state and its connection with security issue, since, primarily, state’s weakness influence its population. This is expressed in its forfeiture of monopoly on violence in inability of the state to be an unbiased arbitrator as well as to provide satisfactory level of access to public goods.

Despite the presence of important scientific results, obtained by foreign and Russian scientists in this sphere, researches concerning state insolvency are still on the stage of their development. Specific content, implied for

“state insolvency” concept, is absent and there are no unified criteria of its assessment. Even the research of classic Nettle (1968) lacks detailed conceptualization and operationalization of the concept “state insolvency” and the scheme of ranging and ordering of some historically formed political systems which was suggested by him, can’t be used as a unified research instrument.

In one of her works, Meleshkina (2011) states that among all the variety of the opinions available, there are two main and obvious approaches to understanding of this notion. They may be conditionally defined as functional and identification one. The first one proceeds from considering state’s solvency as its ability to execute its main functions and the second approach considers state’s solvency to be result of people’s political identification with the state, recognition of the latter and consolidation of political community.

These approaches are oriented at qualitative analysis of the problem of states’ solvency, though its application is not always feasible and reasonable from scientific point of view. First, the studies may have descriptive or non-strict character. Second, they do not exclude various understandings of this or that phenomenon or its character by the researchers for example, the number of functions that are attached to state or characteristics that occur on specific stage of its formation. Third, both approaches focus on internal factors of solvency (construction and functioning of identity, development of public authority structures) and do not consider external aspect of new territorial formations that occurred in international system.

It is essential to give both qualitative and quantitative estimation of solvency of “disputable states”. One of the first specialists who decided to close this gap in political science were leading specialists in this sphere, academics of comparative political studies department of Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO) (RF MFA) (Ilyin *et al.*, 2010; Kudryashova, 2011).

There is an interesting notion about unrecognizing as one of the parameters of “state’s insolvency” which “to a significant degree paralyze all external activity of state formation and impedes all internal transformations and development”.

Indeed, the majority of partially recognized and self-styled states are deprived of possibility to perform economical activities, conclude lucrative commercial agreements and implement joint investing and infrastructure projects. A rule of thumb states that many of such states rely only on humanitarian aid from world community. In a number of cases any social and cultural projects, realized by them as well as collaboration with

various countries and regions are still found to be in an embryo state. Thus, if talking about correlation between non-recognition and insolvency, we can not but agree that political and legal recognition of any territory directly provides its existence and development and non-recognition of states contribute to conservation of their quasi national identity.

However if considering the problem of insolvency not only in terms of “disputable states” notion, we will see that non-recognition and insolvency do not always influence each other. For example, it is typical for a number of “disputable states” to go through a conflict between obtaining status of sovereign state and their inability to realize it in future. Jackson and Rosberg (1982) attempted to explain this paradox on the base of investigation of decolonization processes in Africa.

The majority of new independent countries of this continent were included into international system at the account of full recognition and support of their sovereignty by leading actors of global politics, though, after these processes were implemented, they were not able to become states in the broad sense of this word. In fact they failed to provide functioning of their public institutions.

While explaining the reasons of recognition of these territorial formations, Ilyin *et al.* (2010) state in their study that it was connected with the logics of interchangeable international systems which required assignment of territories, involved into European, international and then global politics, to sovereigns as the only possible and legal type of political actors. If these counties became the subjects of the world politics, they would accept general rules of sovereignty and norms of international law. However, this explanation does not answers the following question: why today international community can not act the same way, regardless of the precedent created but instead it uses insolvency to refuse to recognize the state?

Similar opinion regarding formation of states was expressed by Fukuyama (2005). Referring to Krasner, he noted that “high degree of political competitiveness that led to formation of states in Europe, could not favour creation of strong states in various parts of developing world”. It means that “nation identity” was in some way gifted to some counties by international institutions or other strong countries. That was the case of UNO for East Timor, the World Bank in Sierra Leone, Office of the High Representative of UNO in Bosnia, American occupation authorities in Iraq (Meleshkina, 2011; Fukuyama, 2005). Political and economical condition and space, occupied by them in international system do not correspond to each other.

The number of states that may be called failed ones varies depending on the estimation indices; if the criteria

are severe, we may name about twenty of such countries, if we use less stiff criteria, it would be >50 countries (FFP, 2011). Besides artificial and unviable formations in Africa and Latin America, the number of states that appeared on world map as a result of disintegration of Yugoslavia and the USSR may also be called “failed” ones.

In spite of differences between these countries, they are united by some common features; first, central power does not cover the entire territory; second, regional, ethnic, clan and religious loyalties squeeze out the loyalties towards the state. Third, since national economics is very weak or is absent at all, people survive by involving into quasi-legal and illegal activities from shuttle trades and contraband traffic to arms sales, production and distribution of drugs (Malakhov, 2007). As Malakhov (2007) supposes, these characteristics are enough for detection of insolvent countries. Though this approach seems to be too narrow for me, since it does not reflect actual realities of world politics and disregards states with various degrees of recognition which are also being their subjects. Also, Malakhov (2007) does not consider the fact that currently there are a lot of polities that assimilate or simulate various characteristics of national identity.

As it can be seen from the earlier, insolvency is a characteristic that may be owned by both non-recognized and partially recognized states and by established, recognized state, since the majority of formations are able neither to properly influence politics, social and economic conditions within their countries, nor to define the results of these conditions. Hence, recognition do not takes disputable status away from these countries. In this connection, it would be debatable to use the term “insolvency” as one of the conditions for recognition of this or that territorial formation and comprisal of it into any leading international organization.

In my opinion, the term “disputable state” includes quasi-public entities that have various degree of recognition or non-recognition which do not have a monopoly of the government to use power do not have unified controlling system and cultural identity that would be common for all the people which proves its right to existence and active participation in international affairs in virtue of one’s political and economical insolvency.

#### **“DISPUTABLE STATES” AND POLITICAL INEQUALITY ON A GLOBAL BASIS**

It is rather difficult to define chronological framework of occurrence of “disputable states”. Some states have been existing as problematic territorial formation for a long

period of time and some of them have occurred relatively recently. The reasons for their creation are conditioned by different stages of modernization, generations of international systems and internal political innovations. Important landmarks as Ilyin *et al.* (2010) states, were presented by “the beginning of the 19th century, the second part of the 19th century and then in the 20th century three waves of institutional construction, divided by world wars, the end of Cold war and disintegration of bipolar system at the cusp of 1980-1990s”.

Within the framework of this scientific study, particularly the last approach is of some interest, since it is connected with development of concept of democratic transit and transformation. This period was marked by “qualitative switch of economical, political and social systems which is not limited by transfer of formal attributes of newly introduced system to new rounds but which offers actors to accept new core rules and establish them in political, economical and social life” (Glukhova, 2007).

However, study of this process through the example of countries of South-Eastern Europe and post-Soviet area allowed transitologists to realize that post-socialistic formations lead to creation of “defective democracies” that favour states’ insolvency. These countries were expected to quickly transform into free democratic states with effective market-based economy but that expectations were not implemented.

Longsome phase of establishment of new institutions (“disputable states”) followed fast collapse of old system. Such states, although being in the system of international relations are not always able to estimate the probability of profits and losses of alternative solutions, offered to them by leading actors of world politics. This allows the latter to use such countries as an instrument for realization of their aims and defense of their national interests.

The problem is that “disputable states” have initially unequal conditions in comparison to developed countries. The most of “disputable states” suffer many political, social and economic problems that limit their self-consistency and screw the dependencies from developed countries.

The gap in development is of principal character, thus it is difficult for those who hurry after someone to come up with the ones that are “onward”. It is also obvious that established states will not let under-developed countries change their status. Even direct foreign investments or forwarded human resources often are more profitable to investors than to the countries they are forwarded to (for example, the Republic of Kosovo or Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Thus, we may state that underdevelopment of “disputable states” is not an accidental thing. From the

one side, it is caused by internal factors (void structure of borders, weakness of law enforcement forces, tax system and control of financial system, intensive migration processes and a large number of refugee immigrants) and from the other side, complex system of connection of government elites of “disputable states” with leading actors of world politics; established leading countries, supranational structures and international organizations.

Nevertheless, one has to agree with representatives of “theory of dependant development” (Prebisch, Galtung) who thought that ‘developing countries’ will be able to get rid of the dependence in future. However, it is doubtful that according to them, required condition for leaving vicious circle of violence and poverty by these countries would be change of policy by international institutions, primarily, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as subdivisions of UNO, that are in charge for studies of economic problems (Malakhov, 2007).

## CONCLUSION

Thus, while trying to build optimal analytical model, I used new institutional economics approach, the key postulate of which is “institutions matter” (Lane and Ersson, 2000). Conducted study proved that “disputable state” is an important institution in modern global system. Presence of such territorial formations as was wisely captured by Ilyin *et al.* (2010) allows diagnosing failures in function coordinate net. Thus for instance, long-standing uncertainty of status of “disputable states”, the basis of which is presented by the absence of methodology of self-states state’s legitimation as a full-fledged subject of world politics that would be recognized not recognized or partially recognized by all members of UNO, points at system dysfunction of world political system.

The absence of developed and captured specific optimal criteria of national identity in normative legal documents, absence of recognition and assessment of solvency which are essential for every subject of world system, leads to the usage of double standard policy by the USA, Russia and leading European countries in respect to new territorial formations. Retrospective analysis of “disputable states” showed that even the presence of basic attributes of national identity does not give a warranty to states to be recognized.

The research demonstrated that “disputable states” are complex and multi-faceted phenomenon of contemporary political life. The majority of them own minimal set of national identity’s attributes, various degrees of recognition and independency. Although,

“disputable states” are rather weak, they significantly influence the processes of the world politics; occupying its place in the system of international relations, they actively interact with adjacent territories, leading states in global politics, supranational structures and other organizations that are similar to them.

Studying of the “disputable states” theory allowed detecting several tendencies in modern global politics. First of all, one of the most important trends is a decrease of state’s role as a leading actor of the world politics from the one side and seeking of some ethnic groups to gain its national identity from the other side. This is expressed in the fact that in some regions the most developed countries that solved the task of creation of national states yet in the previous century are trying to integrate and form new supranational institutions while other ethnic groups that were formerly deprived of the identity has very recently started solving this task.

Second, multi-confessional post-Soviet countries that seek to integrate into European structures are actively defending their sovereignty which is the most appropriate form of resolving the task of keeping one’s ethnical and confessional identity.

Third, despite that modern stage is characterized by states’ crisis, the number of them is still growing. The most part of countries that are members of UNO currently do not always demonstrate classical indices of national identity and solvency. In this connection, territorial organization of political life, representation of interests of various social groups, execution of public authorities, serving the interests of all the society and also representation in the international field, i.e., self-sufficient ability to fully realize its internal and external sovereignty are not omnibus criteria for assessment of modern states.

Detected tendencies imply the necessity of rethinking of content-related filling of “the state” concept. In my opinion, now-a-days it would be more reasonable to speak about its average concept. Complex of characteristics, attributive to “national” and “disputable” states as well as the definition of their common features compose the essence of contemporary understanding of the state, which should not be compared with some ideal models.

Thus, we should proceed on the basis that state is a formation that has its constant population, specific territory, its own government and ability to interrelate with other states which doesn’t imply external recognition by other countries. However, it is obvious that this understanding of the concept “state” will lead to

necessity of changing both world political map and international system which will be widened by means of including various “disputable states” into it which is not favourable in terms of security and international stability to leading actors of global politics. Nevertheless, one should accept that currently activities of “disputable states” is already a norm for world politics and their external institutionalization will soon allow them to become independent actors of global systems.

As it can be seen from the earlier, detected tendencies carry interference that there are no political processes that may be called single-linear/single-vector ones, since all of them are contradictable and multivalued.

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